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10. *Geococcyx californianus*. Roadrunner. A second record for the County, Lake Merced, March 19, 1911 (Carriger and Ray).

11. *Ceryle alcyon*. Belted Kingfisher. We located a freshly-dug nesting burrow March 19, 1911, and an old one, July 4, 1912; both in sandy cliffs at Lake Merced.

12. *Colaptes cafer collaris*. Red-shafted Flicker. De Groot found a nest in a fence-post cavity in Golden Gate Park, May 21, 1916, with five well-incubated eggs.

13. *Calypte anna*. Anna Hummingbird. An early nesting date is that of a set of two fresh eggs noted by De Groot at Lake Merced, February 23, 1915. He notes that this and other early nests were thickly lined with feathers, perhaps for the reason he gives, that plant down and "willow cotton" were not procurable. He states that all late nests had the latter lining.

15. *Selasphorus alleni*. Allen Hummingbird. I have since found this hummer to be a common nester through a long season in our County. Carriger found a very beautiful nest in an acacia tree near North Lake, April 18, 1915. It was exceptionally high walled, very light colored and daintily decorated. Incubation had made a slight start in one of the two eggs it held. In sharp contrast to the actions of *Calypte anna*, this hummingbird usually whizzes off its nest and does not return to debate the question of ownership. This, a very striking difference in temperament, I do not remember having seen noted by other writers.

17. *Empidonax difficilis*. Western Flycatcher. A second breeding record for the County is De Groot's nest found in the Lake Merced region, May 26, 1916. It was placed fifteen feet up in a cypress crotch and held four eggs, dark with incubation.

18. *Otocoris alpestris actia*. California Horned Lark. On April 22, 1911, Carriger collected a set of four well-incubated eggs in a very open situation on the Ingleside Golf Links. The bird flushed at our feet it being almost dusk at the time. De Groot also found a nest of this bird, May 24, 1915, on the top of Twin Peaks about ten feet from the reservoir. The nest, a slight hollow, grass lined, contained three eggs well along in incubation.

19. *Sturnella neglecta*. Western Meadowlark.

23. *Euphagus cyanocephalus*. Brewer Blackbird. Carriger and I have noted both these species breeding in the Lake Merced district.

24. *Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*. House Finch. I saw a veritable cloud of these birds, at least 5000, settle on the telegraph wires and nearby trees near Lake Merced, April 23, 1911. From the thousands of feathered throats came a great chorus that was indescribably beautiful.

27. *Passer domesticus*. European House Sparrow. I can record two very late nesting dates: August 30, 1914, birds building in the Mission district; October 10, 1914, four fresh eggs noted in a nest above a door step, where I then lived, no. 299 San Jose Avenue.

34. *Petrochelidon lunifrons*. Cliff Swallow. Carriger and I noted an unusual departure in the nesting of this bird, in the sandy cliffs at Lake Merced. The sand was evidently too soft to hold a plastered nest, so the birds were using burrows like the Bank Swallows, with a very small arch of mud plastered over the entrance.

43. *Hylocichla ustulata ustulata*. Russet-backed Thrush. My only nests of this bird were several found years ago. De Groot located one May 21, 1916, in Golden Gate Park, with four fresh eggs. It was situated in a patch of bamboo bushes close to the nest of the Western Robin, previously noted.

San Francisco, California, October 9, 1916.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Grammatical Errors in Vernacular Names.—Many times we see earnest recommendations in these columns from ardent ornithologists advocating changes in the vernacular names of birds, the present names of which seem to be misleading or erroneous. Two apparently glaring grammatical errors seem to have escaped notice up to now but here we have them.

Most birds have qualifying names which tend to point out some peculiarity in the

bird which distinguishes it from its relatives in the same genus. Where the character is one of habit or pertains to its notes and song the present participle is the form the adjective takes. Thus we have Laughing Gull, Cackling Goose, Whooping and Whistling Swans, Whooping Crane, Ant-eating Woodpecker, Worm-eating Warbler, Warbling Vireo, and Mourning Warbler. Departures from this practice occur in such names as Melodious Grassquit, Clapper Rail and Trumpeter Swan, but these forms seem permissible.

There are two names, however, which are very much off color, Screech Owl and the Song Sparrow. It seems that, aside from the grammatical error committed, the more prevalent practice should have dictated that these names be Screeching Owl and Singing Sparrow. Screech Owl and Song Sparrow seem good enough names through long usage, but witness how ludicrous the above list of birds would appear were we to change their names to agree with the form expressed in the case of the owl and the sparrow. We would have Laugh Gull, Cackle Goose, Whoop and Whistle Swans, Whoop Crane, Warble Vireo, Mourn Warbler, Melody Grassquit, Clap Rail and Trumpet Swan!

Nouns are used as adjectives, but the meaning is totally different from that in which the present participial form is used. Thus, where we have cow-barn, tire-rack, shot-gun or iron knife the meaning is a barn for a cow, a rack for tires, a gun for shot, and a knife of iron; simply a phrase shortened into two nouns, one of which is used as an adjective. The meaning of Screech Owl and Song Sparrow is obviously an owl which screeches and a sparrow which sings, and not an owl for screeches nor a sparrow for or of song.

So when we get around to doing any changing of names let us set these right before the Gull, Swan and Goose laugh, whoop and cackle at the poor little owl and sparrow!—J. R. PEMBERTON, *Colton, California*.

Are there Two Forms of the Bryant Marsh Sparrow in San Francisco County?—Joseph Mailliard's note on the Bryant Marsh Sparrow in a recent issue of THE CONDOR suggests a solution to what has been a puzzling problem to me for some time. I have found the Bryant Marsh Sparrow breeding on the Islais Marsh, south of the Potrero district. But there are other birds apparently of this species, averaging somewhat lighter, however, found resident in the Presidio, on the Ingleside Golf Links, and high up the slopes of Twin Peaks. I have noted them many times during the breeding season at the two last named stations. Most of the books speak of this sparrow as though it were found nowhere else than on the salicornia marshes near sea level. It is my opinion that there is an upland form of *Passerculus sandwichensis bryanti* which verges toward *P. s. alaudinus*, and that it ranges from Humboldt County south at least to the Transition area of San Francisco County. I may add that I noted this same light-color Bryant Marsh Sparrow last July on the uplands of western Sonoma County some miles from the sea.—W. A. SQUIRES, *San Francisco, California*.

Caspian Tern in the San Joaquin Valley.—At the time of the appearance of the September (1916) number of THE CONDOR, I had what appeared to be in newspaper parlance a "scoop" on the Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) in the way of a late summer, or early fall interior record, and had a short article upon this subject scrolled out, waiting only the disappearance of this species from the scene before finishing it up and sending it in to the Editor. But meanwhile the above-mentioned number of our journal came out containing John G. Tyler's *Supplementary List of Birds of the Fresno District*, in which there are several records of this species.

However, as Grinnell's *Distributional List of the Birds of California* gives this bird as a "Rather rare winter visitant and migrant, both coastwise and in the interior", with a few records following, most of which are winter with only two spring and no fall records, it should be worthy of note that several individuals have been paying a prolonged visit to the Rancho Dos Rios, near the mouth of the Tuolumne River, Stanislaus County, as many as a dozen having been seen at one time and two specimens taken for positive identification.

It happened this summer that some seepage water was left on our ranch in a depressed piece of ground several acres in extent, and the resulting shallow ponds proved very attractive to several species of aquatic birds. Among these the Caspian Tern chose

these ponds for a temporary abiding place from which it sallied forth from time to time to scan the neighboring lagoons for stray fish floating on the surface of their waters, flying up and down each lagoon or lakelet for a few turns, picking up a tidbit here and there and finally returning to its resting place at the shallow ponds.

For several years past large terns have been noticed in the spring, mostly in May, flying north in groups of two or three, some days quite a number passing by, perhaps half a dozen being in sight at once. But no opportunity ever offered for procuring a specimen for positive identification, although there seemed but little doubt as to the species being *Sterna caspia*. It always happened that when my gun was near, the birds were too far away to reach, and when they were near enough the gun was too far away! Returning in the fall the same thing happened. This fall, however, the large terns were first noticed on September 4, when three or four were seen flying up and down a charming little lake upon the shore of which the main house is situated. Retiring shortly from this lake the birds flew over the shallow ponds spoken of above, which they evidently made their headquarters.

For several weeks after this date some of these birds were always in evidence, while their rather harsh cry or else a sort of gentle little short and trilling whistle could be heard not only at any time of daylight but even in the late dusk of the evening. They were very wary and the chances of happening within gunshot greatly against the collector, but two specimens were finally secured, proving their identity beyond a doubt. On October 6 there were still three or four of the birds on the place.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, California*.

Nesting Habits of the Virginia Rail in Mariposa County, California.—On June 5, 1916, while mowing grass in a small marsh on our home place, on Smith Creek near Coulterville, Mariposa County, California, my father discovered the nest and eggs of a Virginia Rail (*Rallus virginianus*). The nest was a tower-like structure composed of flat marsh grasses. It measured eight inches in height and the same in diameter. The ten brown-and-lilac-spotted eggs were just beginning to be incubated.

As compared with eggs of other birds nesting in this vicinity they resemble most closely those of the Valley Quail, but are proportionately longer and darker colored. The grass clump in which the nest was situated was not disturbed in mowing, and near by there was a high bank from which the nest could be easily observed. When anyone approached the vicinity of the nest the incubating bird would slip quietly off; but sometimes she could be heard splashing through the water as she ran. Usually she did not go more than six feet from the nest and would then stand quietly in the grass where she would appear like nothing more than a dark shadow. Whenever any one of us would go near the nest, which we did almost every day, the female would utter a low clucking sound.

Nothing was seen of the male until June 18 when, as we approached the nest, an ear-piercing scream came from him as he stood some distance away in the marsh grass. This whistle was answered by a similar but softer note from his mate. The male showed himself only momentarily as he skulked through the grass as if attempting to distract our attention from the nest.

On June 19 there were six coal black young in the nest. They had black-ringed pink bills, and their feet were very large in proportion to their bodies. Now the demeanor of the female changed. She forgot her shyness and walked out in the open within three feet of where we stood. She fluffed up her feathers after the manner of a sitting hen and uttered many clucks and whistles which were answered by the shrill whistle of the male. He was not so brave as she, and did not show himself except at intervals. On this same day several of the young clambered out of the nest into the water. We replaced them and quitted the vicinity so as not to disturb the family. Later in the day we visited the nest again and found the female absent. Soon the male whistled, his mate answered, and she soon appeared from a grass clump, swimming and wading across a bit of open water to the nest.

By the evening of the nineteenth another egg had hatched and on the morning of the twentieth two more. The last egg hatched on the afternoon of the twentieth. On the morning of June 21 the family had departed and we saw no more of them, save for one that showed itself for a moment in the marsh one day late in July.—DONALD D. McLEAN, *Coulterville, California*.

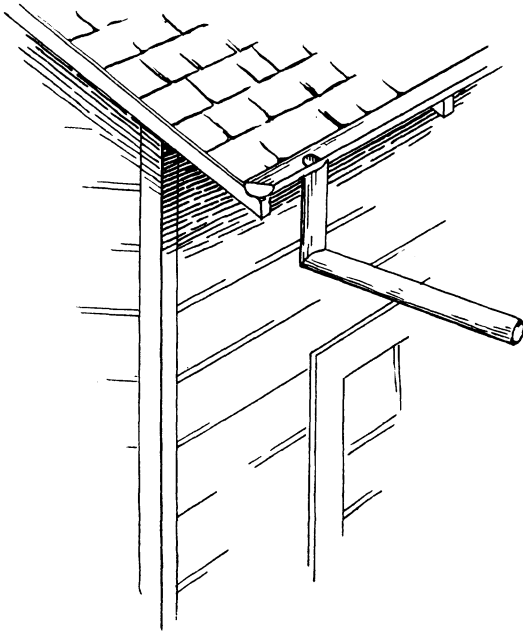


Fig. 56. DRAIN PIPE USED AS A NESTING SITE BY A PAIR OF ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHERS.

Peculiar Nesting Site of Ash-throated Flycatcher.—We had just discovered a *Phainopepla*'s nest in a pepper tree along side of a road in Linda Vista, four miles west of Pasadena, California, when a woman appeared and asked us what we were doing. After explaining, to her satisfaction, that we did not intend to disturb any of the nests in her vicinity she gained sufficient confidence in us to ask the identity of a bird nesting in her yard. Investigation disclosed an Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens cinerascens*) carrying food in its bill to a peculiarly situated nest. At the northeast corner of the house a four-inch galvanized pipe about three feet long had been soldered to the outlet of the eaves trough in order to prevent rain water from falling against the house. In the elbow of this three-foot length of pipe a pair of Ash-throated Flycatchers had built their nest (see fig. 56).

We were told that in building the nest the birds first entered the open end of the

pipe, but later used the entrance through the eave trough, which was little more than two and one-half inches in diameter. At the time of our visit, June 23, 1916, the nest contained young, which, by their calls, must have been partly feathered. Although the Crested Flycatcher of the East (*Myiarchus crinitus*) is known to nest occasionally in an artificial environment this is the first instance that has come to our notice of the Ash-throated Flycatcher, with its notably retiring disposition, taking kindly enough to civilization to nest in a door yard.—HAROLD C. BRYANT and AMY M. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California*.

Bird Notes from Palo Verde, Imperial County, California.—*Querquedula cyanoptera*. Cinnamon Teal. On June 30, 1916, I was out in the flooded country when I found a duck's nest with seven creamy white eggs. No bird was on the nest but there were lots of duck tracks in the mud close by. The nest was under a small bush on the top of a levee about three feet from the water's edge. It was not very well lined but contained some grass and a few feathers. On July 2 I was back, but the young had hatched; on looking around I saw six young, with the mother teal trying to get them away. The old male was on hand and tried to lead me away with the broken-wing game. The young were seen often after that but would always be in the brush.

Porzana carolina. Sora Rail. One pair was seen all summer in a large bunch of tules on the lagoon about half a mile south of Palo Verde; no nest found.

Plegadis guarauna. White-faced Glossy Ibis.

Himantopus mexicanus. Black-necked Stilt. Both these were seen all summer from May 12, till the fall migration, but no nests were found, though some young birds were seen flying around.

Oryechus vociferus. Killdeer. Several nests were found and lots of young seen, in the flooded country during high water.

Melopelia asiatica. White-winged Dove. No nests were found this year, but several seen in 1915. This year the birds were mostly back on the mesa or along the edge of the valley. They may have moved back on account of the flood.

Chaemepelia passerina pallescens. Mexican Ground Dove. Two nests found in 1915. Only one pair of birds seen regularly this summer. Several seen in August and September in the grass flats where the overflow had been.

Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi. Harris Hawk. July 25, 1916, I saw four full-grown young, not able to fly. They were in a cottonwood in a small marsh about two miles south of Palo Verde.

Pyrocephalus rubinus mexicanus. Vermilion Flycatcher. On April 7, 1916, I found a nest north of the store in a screw-bean over-hanging the water. There were two eggs in it about ready to hatch. The young grew up and left the nest. I also found a nest back of the schoolhouse on April 16 with fairly fresh eggs. The birds were ready to fly on May 12. On passing the nest north of the store on June 1 I looked in and was surprised to see three more young birds in the nest, and on looking into the nest back of the schoolhouse found it to contain three eggs. In both cases the nest was twice used in the same season.—LEO WILEY, *Palo Verde, California*.

Another Record of the Wood Ibis in California.—On Sunday morning, August 13, 1916, while returning north on the Santa Fé from San Diego, I was surprised and delighted to see a flock of about twenty Wood Ibises (*Mycteria americana*). I was sitting on the rear platform of the observation car and saw the flock just after our train had crossed the broad delta of a small stream near Oceanside. The birds were flying from the ocean, inland up the rather broad valley of the practically dry stream. Although I had not seen a live Wood Ibis since August, 1888, when I saw seven on the lower Wabash, I at once recognized these birds. Their heavy wing-flaps, their white bodies and black wings could not be mistaken. Messrs. Grinnell and Daggett saw a flock in the same place August 5, 1902 (see CONDOR, v, 1903, p. 18).—BARTON WARREN EVERMANN, *San Francisco, California*.

The Alaska Water-thrush in Marin County, California.—August 13, 1916, I took a trip to Muir Woods in company with several friends. While hiking along what is known as the Bootjack Trail, I suddenly came upon an Alaska Water-thrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis*) perched on a large boulder near a stream. At this point there was a great deal of underbrush and ferns along the banks, and several small cataracts in the stream. Upon catching sight of me the bird uttered small chirps, and continually teetered and dipped from side to side. I was able to approach within a few feet of it, and noted that the general color was brownish, with black streakings on the breast, and a whitish line through the eye. After a few minutes another one appeared, and the two flew into the underbrush. The white stripe through the eye, and the teetering motion like that of the American Dipper, to my mind makes the identification of this bird unmistakable. As there seem to be only four other records of the occurrence of this species within the State, I thought that my finding it in Marin County might be of some interest.—HAROLD E. HANSEN, *San Francisco, California*.

The Dwarf Screech Owl in the State of Washington.—Unless it be for an occasional "sight record", I believe the Dwarf Screech Owl (*Otus flammeolus idahoensis*) has seldom been recorded in Washington. It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to report the capture of an adult female at Kiona, Benton County, Washington, by Mr. F. R. Decker of that place. An examination showed it to be beyond much doubt a breeding bird. The only possible nesting sites in the vicinity were numerous holes made by Bank Swallows, etc., in a large sandy cliff, so it is possible that this bird may use something besides holes in trees as a place for raising its young. The specimen was taken on May 29, 1916, and is now in the collection of Mr. D. E. Brown, at Seattle, Washington.—J. H. BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington*.

Cleaning Skulls and Skeletons: a Supplementary Note.—Since the publication of the description of the process of cleaning skulls and disarticulated skeletons two years ago (CONDOR, xvi, 1914, pp. 239-241), different re-agents have been tested to replace in whole or in part the solutions described. These experiments have resulted in one change, only. In place of the Carbolic Acid, substitute Cresylic Acid (Cresol, $C_6H_4CH_3OH$): one part Cresol in place of twenty-five to fifty parts of Carbolic Acid. One-half ounce of Cresylic Acid has been found to be sufficient for a solution containing two quarts of ammonia and six gallons of water. No harmful effects have been caused by the use of a very concentrated solution of Cresol. Cresol costs about thirty-five cents a pound, thus making its use more economical than that of Carbolic Acid.—F. HARVEY HOLDEN, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley*.

Some Field Notes from Western Sonoma County, California.—I spent the month of July, 1916, in western Sonoma County, with headquarters at Camp Meeker. Several trips were made into various parts of the county. These trips covered pretty thoroughly the territory from Santa Rosa to Cazadero, thence west to the ocean and south to the Marin County line. The following list does not contain all the birds noted; only those are mentioned whose occurrence in the territory explored seems worthy of note.

Lunda cirrhata. Tufted Puffin. One flew out from under an over-hanging rocky cliff near the mouth of the Russian River, July 17.

Oceanodroma kaedingi. Kaeding Petrel. A bird believed to be of this species, certainly a petrel, was seen to fly out of a cleft in a high rocky cliff about one mile south of the mouth of the Russian River on the same day that the puffin was seen. It is possible that a few of these birds nested there earlier in the season.

Mergus serrator. Red-breasted Merganser. A male and female seen on the Russian River about a mile from the ocean on July 17. This duck is a common winter visitant to these shores, but its occurrence in mid-July seems rather unusual.

Actitis macularia. Spotted Sandpiper. Several seen on the Russian River between Monte Rio and Duncan's Mills, July 10. Two young not yet able to fly, but abundantly able to run, were seen.

Columba fasciata fasciata. Band-tailed Pigeon. Two were seen on Willow Creek, July 17. More were heard hooting in the redwoods along the same stream.

Pandion haliaetus carolinensis. American Osprey. One was seen about a mile from the mouth of the Russian River on July 17. It was catching fish by plunging into the river. Two others were seen a mile above Monte Rio on July 22. One nest was noted on the very tall stump of a broken redwood near Rio Campo. Bird students will doubtless be glad to know that this interesting bird is still breeding on the Russian River.

Agelaius phoeniceus caurinus. Northwestern Red-winged Blackbird. The Red-winged Blackbirds of the lower Russian River seem to me to be of this subspecies rather than *Agelaius phoeniceus californicus*. No specimens were taken, but it is my opinion that an examination of specimens would reveal that what I have suggested is true.

Junco oreganus thurberi. Sierra Junco. Birds of this species were seen feeding young at Camp Meeker on July 2. They have been noted at Cazadero before, but this seems to be the first time they have been found breeding as far south in Sonoma County as Camp Meeker.

Piranga ludoviciana. Western Tanager. An adult male was seen on the Russian River about a mile above Duncan's Mills, July 10.

Hylocichla guttata slevini. Monterey Hermit Thrush. Noted twice at Camp Meeker and heard almost every evening in the redwood cañons back of the camp.—W. A. SQUIRES, *San Francisco, California*.

Notes on the Dark-bodied Shearwater.—*Puffinus griseus* has been observed on San Francisco Bay more frequently during July and August of the present year than it has ever before been my good fortune to record, recent observations having been as follows:

July 20, 4:40 P. M. A small movement was noted westerly from Alcatraz Island, where the birds were working their way oceanwards along the outer edge of an extremely heavy "channel fog".

July 21, 4:35 P. M. A similar movement was observed under like conditions in about the same locality.

July 22, 8:17 A. M. A small group of these birds was seen, again in the same locality, bobbing up and down on the choppy water. As the ferry boat approached, they lumberingly took to wing, passing directly across our bow, some dropping on the water but a few feet away. This afforded such a close view as to confirm the identification.

August 7, 7:15 A. M. A lone individual was seen settled on the water and in the same locality.

The last two records were made on beautifully clear days thus casting doubt upon the theory that San Francisco Bay occurrences are due to misdirected wanderings during exceptionally thick fogs. It now seems more probable that unusually heavy runs of fish bring us these casual visitors.—JOHN W. MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, California*.

Snakes as Nest Robbers.—During the spring and summer of 1916, while collecting near Colton, California, we had the unpleasant experience of returning to many nests, which had a few days before contained incomplete sets or been ready for eggs, only to find them empty. Suspicion was not directed towards the birds themselves because of the great variety of species in which this occurred, nor could it be directed towards jays, for none were present within several miles. Cats, weasels, skunks and foxes were to be eliminated, for in no case was a nest found to be in the least ruffled or disturbed, the eggs having been extracted as deftly as we could have done ourselves, perhaps more so. Lack of any snakes in evidence and the large numbers of nests thus violated prevented a charge being made at the time against them. It almost seemed as if some other collector was dogging our steps and getting our booty.

One day, however, as a nest of a Least Vireo, which was due to have a full set, was approached, a great twittering, crying and chattering from the parent birds was heard. As the nest came into view the cause of the disturbance also appeared. It consisted of a nice slim brown and white snake nicely poised above the nest which was now quite empty. It can not be said with certainty, but it *appeared* that some of the egg was still upon his chin!

On the same day attention was called to a nest of the Black-chinned Sparrow by the cries of the bird, and examination disclosed a thin striped snake with his head actually inside the cup of the nest. The nest was empty and the snake was evidently looking for more.

Another instance which came to our notice, but was not observed by us, showed the collecting proclivities of the snake. In this case a nest of the Pacific Black-headed Grosbeak, which was placed seven feet from the ground in a small sycamore tree, was robbed by a gopher snake. The robbery was witnessed by a boy and reported to us.

The snakes concerned in these three instances were of different species: A Milk or King Snake (*Lampropeltis boylii*) got the vireo eggs; a Garter Snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*) got the sparrow eggs; a Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*) got the grosbeak eggs.

From the large number of robbed nests which came to our notice, it would appear that snakes, probably nearly all varieties present, depend in part during the nesting season on eggs and possibly small young for food. Nearly all the nests so robbed were placed in low bushes and were easily reached by snakes. The fact that a bird will raise a hue and cry as a snake, itself unaware, approaches the nest, probably leads the snake to look for the cause of the anxiety on the part of the bird, and the nest is found. It seems to me improbable that a snake can find a nest without being directed by the bird.

Now while a snake has a perfectly good right to hunt his prey, it seems too bad that they cut into our field. At the same time it does not seem justifiable to kill at sight each and every snake; much better take off the hat to him and then chase him well into the next county where he will do the most good.—J. R. PEMBERTON and H. W. CARRIGER, Colton, California.

Spotted Owl from the San Gabriel Canyon, Los Angeles County, California.—While trout-fishing near Cold Brook Camp in the north fork of the West Fork of the San Gabriel Canyon, Los Angeles County, on May 1, 1916, I took a beautiful adult male Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*). The bird was sitting about fifty feet up in a large oak tree in a narrow rather densely shaded canyon, at an elevation of nearly four thousand feet. The summer of 1914 I spent two months at Cold Brook but did not meet with any of these owls, although large owls, perhaps of this species, were reported to me several times.—WRIGHT M. PIERCE, Claremont, California.